

### **The Consultation Period**

#### ***1. Is the public consultation period invalid if parents were only emailed about the consultation on the 17th September?***

The consultation was launched on Monday 12 September with announcements on the 'News' section of the school's main web page, Twitter, the school Facebook account and press notices. Parents were notified in their weekly email on Friday 17 September. The closing date for final comments is midnight on Sunday 16 October. This means that the consultation will run for exactly 5 weeks. This is in line with government guidance that states that the consultation period must be a minimum of 4 weeks.

### **People working on the MAT development**

#### ***2. How is Cotham governors forming a MAT with like-minded educationalists a unique opportunity?***

Cotham School has been presented with a golden opportunity to bring on board a group of educational experts who can help shape the development of our multi-academy trust plans. We can use their expertise to put in place the very best effective and democratic academy governance, their experience to develop collaborative school-to-school improvement strategies that work and their business acumen to ensure every penny is spent well and focused on our students learning.

#### ***3. How will the formation of our MAT be different to the 'big chains'?***

The multi-academy trust will be formed by changing and adapting our current articles of association and renaming the trust 'Prima Learning Trust'. Unlike some of the big chains the trust will not be sponsored by a private company or big business. It will be led by Cotham School working collaboratively with its trust family of local schools.

#### ***4. Accountability. Other than the stated good intentions, what legal safeguard will be put in place to ensure that Prima Learning Trust is accountable to all of its stakeholders?***

Prima Learning Trust will be regulated as an exempt charity by the Secretary of State for Education. The articles of association set out the rules for how the trust will operate and how it is accountable to stakeholders. The accountability to stakeholders for all the schools is primarily via student outcomes and the monitoring that is carried out by OFSTED. OFSTED have carried out some MAT inspections nationally and over time it is envisaged that the inspection framework for MAT's will develop.

***5. Is Cotham being 'taken over'?*** No. Cotham School will take on the name Prima Learning Trust, have permission to use some of the policies it has developed and have access to its team of experts. After the multi-academy has been established, Prima Learning Trust as it is currently constituted will be closed down.

#### ***6. Why do Cotham School governors want to work with Prima Learning Trust?***

Cotham School governors have agreed that working with Prima Learning Trust offers a fantastic opportunity not only for Cotham School but for the family of schools that will form our eventual MAT. Prima are locally based and at their heart is school

improvement through staff development with a clear impact of learners. The ability to tap into the pool of expertise will help accelerate Cotham School's improvement journey and that will benefit our students and young people's learning. Already, Prima Learning Trustees are making a difference and offering advice and support as the school plans for the future.

In addition, governors felt that a partnership with Prima will attract both Ofsted Outstanding and Good schools into the trust as well as providing the challenge and support needed for schools that require improvement.

Finally, Prima's commercial expertise will help the school make the most of economies of scale and enable more funding to be focused on children and young people's learning.

**7. What are Prima's educational values?** One of the reasons why Prima approached Cotham School as a potential partner is the fact that the values of both organisations aligned. A steering group made up from representatives from both organisations has agreed the proposed values for the new Prima Learning Trust.

"High Standards, Inclusiveness and Cooperation"

The vision of Prima Learning Trust is to provide life-enhancing education that develops the character, talents and potential of every child regardless of starting point or context.

Prima schools are at the heart of their local communities and every school within the trust has its own unique identity. However, each has in common the same unwavering commitment to the highest aspirations for every child. Our schools have a positive culture and ethos where hard work, ambition and high achievement are celebrated and seen as the norm.

Our intention is to create a family of schools, cooperating within the Prima Learning Trust ethos and fully inclusive settings, who strive for and secure the best academic outcomes and therefore life chances for children and young people. We believe this can be achieved through outstanding leadership, strong self-evaluation, involvement of stakeholders in strategy development, outstanding staff and teacher development and excellent communication and engagement. The trust will be open and transparent, 'outward facing' and maintain partnerships with other organisations.

**8. What are the specific roles provided by the Prima staff, that is, the organisation chart?** Prima does not have any paid members of staff so no specific roles have been allocated in the new organisation chart.

**9. Where is the existing Prima Learning Trust based?** Prima is Bristol based. It brings together the expertise of lifelong educationalists, educational research and legal experience. The Trust approached Cotham School to be the founder school to form a collaborative partnership which brings together schools and communities in order to further improve learning and achievement for all children and young people in Bristol.

**10. Who is/are the driving force(s) behind Prima?** Prima was established by Colin McLean, CEO of Best Practice Network, who brought together an exceptional board of Trustees to deliver Prima's vision of providing excellent educational provision for students supported by outstanding professional development for staff.

**11. Who are its key players and why?**

**Paul Brett**

A former teacher, headteacher, and Chief Education Officer of a UK local authority, Paul brings a lifetime of outstanding educational knowledge to the role of Chair for Prima. He has experience of working both nationally and locally in politically driven environments, as well as the intellectual background needed to be a system leader in his own right. Paul is also Chair of the International Schools Partnership, which runs schools around the world.

**Colin McLean**

Colin is the Chief Executive of Best Practice Network. He is responsible for the leadership and strategic management of this highly successful company, which has a track record of delivering outstanding school improvement and professional development services to schools. A former Registered Inspector for Ofsted and a Lead Facilitator for the National College, he is also a Trustee of a MAT in Cornwall.

**Jayne Clemence**

Jayne is Director of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. Her experience includes headship of two special schools in London, and working with Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) as an additional inspector as part of the School Improvement Division.

**Peter Daw**

Peter is a highly qualified educator and leader of school improvement, with wide-ranging experience as a successful senior manager. He has served as a very accomplished HMI and evaluator of educational quality, and has proven success in improving educational outcomes in school, local authority, regional, and national posts.

**Gary Wilkie**

Gary is Chief Executive of the Learning in Harmony Trust (which includes a special school) in London. He is a National Leader of Education, and as a National Support School, Sheringham has supported schools in three authorities. Gary was chair of Newham Association of Primary Headteachers from 2001 to 2013, and led the development of Newham Partnership Working – a mutual company set up by schools to run a range of services in Newham and beyond.

**Professor Sally Thomas**

Sally is a Professor of Education at the University of Bristol's Graduate School of Education and Director of the Centre for Assessment and Evaluation Research in Education. She has published widely on the topics of educational quality, effectiveness, and improvement, using a variety of research approaches (both qualitative and quantitative) – most recently contributing a chapter in *The Routledge International Handbook of Educational Effectiveness: Research, Policy, and Practice* (2015). Her research interests include value-added measures of educational effectiveness, professional learning communities, pupil learning and

citizenship, and education in developing countries. Sally's current projects include 'Evaluation of Research Learning Communities', funded by the Education Endowment Foundation, and 'Educational Progress of Looked After Children', funded by the Nuffield Foundation.

### **Yvonne Atkinson**

Yvonne is a qualified solicitor and has served as Head of Legal Services – as well as Deputy Chief Executive and Borough Solicitor – in three local authorities. She has worked in the private sector, specialising in governance and public, charitable, and company law. More recently she has worked as a Director and Company Secretary for the Board Development Agency, which provides services for the charitable sector. Yvonne has also been a school governor.

**12. How will the new Prima Learning Trust be different from other MATs?** The new Trust brings together the outstanding practice of Cotham with the expertise of Prima Learning Trust. This combination brings additional capacity to ensure that the new MAT will be at the forefront of MAT developments. We want Prima Learning Trust to be an exemplar organisation where others want to join us or learn from us about what works well for pupils and students.

**13. Can Prima assure us that it will work in the best interests of staff and learners?** The new Prima will include Cotham nominated members and trustees and will be committed to transparency and openness. It will invite external examination and audit of its outcomes and operations.

**14. How will other schools join Prima?** We want schools to want to join Prima Learning Trust in order to become part of a highly successful organisation based on collaboration, challenge and support. As the trust matures the Regional Schools Commissioner may recommend some schools join us to receive additional support. This may include circumstances where schools require improvement and who can benefit from our expertise. Appropriate due diligence will need to be carried out to ensure that the trust has a full understanding of the position of the applicant school.

**15. What might be the right number of schools to make the MAT most effective?** The Trust has modest growth plans and wants to make a contribution to overall effectiveness of schools in Bristol. Over time we want to attract at least two primaries and another secondary school into the Trust. The government recommends that a financially healthy MAT should aim to have a minimum of 3,000 students.

**16. How will the change affect the flow and control of funding to the school?** If the change goes ahead and is approved by the Department for Education the new multi-academy trust will be issued with a master funding agreement with a supplementary funding agreement issued in respect of Cotham School. This ensures that the multi-academy trust receives the funding allocated for Cotham School. The new multi-academy trust intends to operate a full delegation model which means that funding and decision making will be delegated to schools. The only funding that is proposed to be retained by the multi-academy trust will be to cover those legal and financial duties that can only be exercised by the trust. An example would be completion and submission of financial returns to the Education Funding Agency and arrangements for internal audit.

**17. The consultant who is advising the school on what to do also works for the company that is going to run the MAT (i.e. Prima) - seems like conflict of interest to me...** Cotham School engaged Christine Bayliss, a freelance educational consultant to support with our Multi Academy Trust conversion at the end of July. Christine was formerly appointed interim Chief Executive of Prima Learning in October 2015, this appointment ended in March 2016. Christine was appointed based on her knowledge skills and experience within the Education Sector. More details of Christine's company and previous experience can be found here [www.cbecs.co.uk](http://www.cbecs.co.uk)

It is important to understand that Prima Learning Trust will not be 'run' by a company, this is explained in more detail in answer to previous questions.

**18. The educational consultant used to perform the report has already a vested interest in Prima Trust therefore how can their report be objective? Is the report not required to be created by a consultant with no attachment to any trust to ensure complete transparency?** The educational consultant supporting Cotham School has no vested interest in Prima Trust. The consultant is working for Cotham School and was selected based on the experience held in this area of work.

**19. Who has funded the MAT discussions with Cotham so far and who funds Prima learning Trust?** The discussions with Cotham School have been funded by the appropriate partners. Best Practice Network have provided initial funding to Prima Learning Trust and will pay for it to be wound up at the end of this year. Best Practice Network will then cease to have any role or play any part in the governance of the new trust.

#### **The Memorandum of Understanding between Prima Learning Trust and Cotham School**

**20. Does the MOU form a contract between the two parties?** No it doesn't form a contract. But it does set out the mutual 'understanding' around, in this case, how both parties will form together to form a MAT.

**21. If Model 1 of the MAT Articles of Association were adopted, who would be the "Foundation/sponsor body" as defined in Interpretations k.?** There will be no foundation of sponsor body. The members of the trust will be individuals.

**22. I note that Paul Brett has signed the MOU as a trustee of Prima Learning Trust. Paragraph 8 also mentions some trustees of the Prima Learning Trust as being effectively pre-appointed to the MAT. Is Prima Learning Trust an exempt charity with the Secretary of State for Education as Principal Regulator? If so on what basis is it exempt and is it on Edubase? If not, please can you let me know the Charity number for Prima Learning Trust as I can't find it or any list of trustees registered with the Charity Commission or elsewhere.** Prima Trust as an Academy Trust is an exempt charity with the Secretary of State for Education as Principal Regulator. All Academy Trusts are exempt charities. Exempt charities do not have a registered charity number. It was incorporated on the 3 September 2015. There is information about Prima Learning Trust on the Companies House web site. Prima Learning Trust is not on Edubase.

**23. Article 6 of the MOU states that "Before the new trust is set up, the current**

**members and trustees of the existing Prima Learning Trust will consider a resolution to terminate Prima Learning Trust (Company Number 09759929) so that the new trust can be named Prima Learning Trust.” If Prima Learning Trust (#09759929) resolves to terminate itself then how can it then nominate 2 Members when the new trust is set up as in paragraph 4?** The proposed resolutions are sequenced to ensure that the name Prima Learning Trust can be transferred to Cotham School, that Prima can nominate its members and then be wound up

**24. What will be the status of the MOU after Prima Learning Trust (Company Number 09759929) has terminated itself?** The MOU sets out the understanding of both parties in forming the trust. Once Prima Learning Trust is wound up it will no longer be relevant

**25. If Prima Learning Trust (Company Number 09759929) considers a resolution to terminate itself and decides not to terminate itself, what is the status of the MOU?** The MOU is not legally binding. If the original PLT chose not to close itself down then it would continue as its own entity and the new trust could not use the name.

**26. The last page of the MOU has a different organization (Best Practice Community Network) nominating two members to the MAT. Best Practice Community Network is a Private Company Limited by Guarantee (07679497) that has no assets and has been dormant since its incorporation in 2011. How is it in Cotham School’s best interests to give such a company the right to nominate two members and have a veto over a third “independent” member?** The document referred to is an annex to the MOU. It is a paper submitted to the Regional Schools Commissioner in June 2016. It is meant to provide context for readers of the MOU. Since that document was written both parties decided that Prima Learning Trust would nominate the members and not Best Practice Community Network.

**27. Who will be choosing the two members and vetoing the third, Prima Learning Trust (Company Number 09759929) or Best Practice Community Network (Company Number 07679497)** Prima Learning Trust will nominate two members of the trust - two members will be nominated by Cotham School and we are trying to identify a third independent members of the trust. Once these members are nominated they will act as individuals because both Prima Learning Trust and Cotham School will cease to exist as separate organisations.

### **Admissions**

**28. As a parent of a child presently at Cotham who has a younger sibling hoping to go to Cotham I really need to know if Cotham does become a MAT will it retain the same admissions policy as it does presently? Will the catchment area remain the same as it is now? Myself and other parents are keen to know if becoming a MAT will change Cotham's admission policy, and if so, how.** There are no plans to change the admissions policy or the area of prime responsibility for Cotham School.

### **MAT Organisation**

**29. If the school proceeds to become a MAT, what is the critical path of events**



**and likely time for the change? Is there a prefer time for the change which is driving the rate & pace of activities e.g. desire to convert this financial or academic year?** Current plans are subject to the outcomes of the consultation and any decisions made by the Regional School Commissioner. Given these constraints, conversion to a MAT could take place as early as February 1 2017. Schools have to put a submission to form a MAT to the RSC, they then have to approve it, once the RSC has given approval the decision to become a MAT has to be taken by the governing bodies of the schools involved.

**30. What is the role of the governing body in the future? In the FAQ's we are told that: "the board of Trustees will deal with the strategic running of the MAT and will delegate the operational day-to-day running of the member schools to each academy's Local Governing Body" The role of a governor is specifically not the day to day running of a school. What role will the Local Governing Body of Cotham School have?** The role of Cotham's local governing will be determined by the Scheme of Delegation. Although the exact terms of the scheme have not been agreed yet, maximum delegation has been adopted as a guiding principle. This means that the Head Teacher at Cotham will be accountable to the local governing body that the day-to-day running of the school is in line with the vision and values of the school and the Trust.

The Trustees would take on responsibilities that would cover aspects that are currently the responsibilities of governors that would become MAT wide:

All HR functions that relate to pay, conditions and employment of staff as all staff will be employees of the MAT rather than the individual schools. Larger MAT's receive an income from the EFA for capital projects so the trustees would take on the responsibility for capital planning and projects. Trustees will be accountable for the progress of all students in the MAT and will be responsible for ensuring that individual schools are working for the benefit of all students, so they will have powers to make sure that they can hold local governing bodies to account.

**31. MATs are seen as beneficial by the governors therefore how specifically will these benefits be measured in relation to the specific needs and diversity of the school? For example how will you know it is working in the way you predict?** Trustees will use a range of performance indicators to measure performance against the values of the Trust. The detail of these measures have yet to be agreed. But they are broadly:

- Firstly that all students irrespective of prior attainment, socio economic background, ethnicity, gender, etc.. are making progress.
- That parents are happy with their child's experience at school.
- That schools within the MAT are able to recruit and retain good staff.
- That schools in the MAT are financially well managed and that excess reserves are not built up or budgets run at a deficit; and
- That other schools want to work with the MAT and possibly join it.

**32. What other MAT models exist already in Bristol that can demonstrate the benefits of the model proposed by the board of Governors?** There are a number of very successful school led MATs. In Bristol, examples are Colston Girls School who lead the CGS Trust and Bristol Cathedral Choir School who lead the Cathedral Schools Trust. The CST have recently been given the green light to open a brand new secondary school in Bristol. Cabot Learning Federation who have built a

MAT containing Primary and Secondary schools which have improved outcomes for students in some cases dramatically. Trust in Learning Academies a MAT with secondary, primary schools a special school have also improved student outcomes.

**33. What are the names of the schools who will be inside the Multi Agency? Will it include more than just the current Redland School partnership if it does which school is it?** We are not in a position to announce the names of any schools who will join the multi-academy trust. Discussions are ongoing with a number of potential partners.

**34. How is it foreseen that the MAT will affect the recruitment, management and development of teaching staff?** We want Prima Learning Trust to be an 'employer of choice' that good and outstanding teachers want to work for. Prima Learning Trust has developed the Prima Guarantee that would guarantee all teaching and associate staff an entitlement to professional development. As other schools join our multi-academy trust they will be expected to contribute to a multi-academy trust wide programme of training and development. Altogether we think that this is an attractive package which will enhance our ability to recruit, manage and develop the very best staff. In our view this is one of the most exciting aspects of the proposal.

**35. What will happen to the existing Prima Learning Trust when the new MAT is set up?** Once the new Prima Learning Trust is set up, the existing trust will be re-named (to allow Cotham School Trust, not the school, to legally take on the name). Having achieved its original objectives of finding an outstanding school to partner, the plan is that next year it will be wound up.

**36. There is SO much bureaucracy involved in running a MAT - the body equivalent to our Governors will have specialist committees above them, 11 specialists above them, and then 5 Managers at the top - and a chief Exec at the very top ... of the 5 managers, only 2 will be 'Cotham' appointed, 2 will be Prima and one will be 'independent' - so it seems Cotham will have a very small voice. Also this bureaucracy will cost - top jobs with huge salaries - and this will need to be funded by efficiency savings at school.** The description of the governance structure is, in part, correct, however it is important to fully understand how it would operate.

A MAT is one legal entity which is set up to run a number of schools. The MAT will have Members and a board of Trustees. The Members are not Directors and are unpaid positions. The proposed Governance structure for the Prima Learning Trust is to appoint 2 members from the current Prima Learning Trust, 2 members for the current Cotham School Trust (Governing Body) and one independent member (these are the individuals referred to as '5 Managers at the top' in the question).

The role and rights of members is analogous to that of shareholders. Members of an academy trust do not have rights of ownership in the company like shareholders because the profits of the company cannot be distributed to them. However, the members can control changes in the constitution (subject to DfE approval) and other fundamental decisions relating to the academy trust. Members also have the right to remove a governor by ordinary resolution (a vote passed by a simple majority of



members). Generally, the members of a company limited by guarantee have few obligations other than their obligations towards the company and the other members, as set out in the constitution and other constitutional documents. This reflects the fact that it is the Trustees of a company that are responsible for its operation. The role of member is likely to therefore be a largely “hands-off role”. Perhaps the distinction between a member and governor is best illustrated by an example; whilst the annual audited accounts will be presented to the members it is the Board of Trustees and the Chair of the trustees who approve, sign them and send them to Companies House.

In a MAT, the board of Trustees has the same governor/director duties as a governing body of a single academy trust. Hence, the board of Trustees will deal with the strategic running of the MAT and will delegate the operational day-to-day running of the member schools to each academy’s Local Governing Body (LGB). The level of delegation to LGBs can be varied to suit specific circumstances. For example, if a school is not performing well, the Trustees may reduce the level of delegation to the relevant LGB until the school improves. An alternative approach would be for the Trustees to appoint new persons to the relevant LGB to strengthen it and impact on performance.

The Board of Trustees have the duties of a company director (as does the current Cotham Governing Body), they are the strategic decision makers for the Multi Academy Trust as a whole. The Board will be selected by the appointed members using a skills analysis to ensure Trustees have appropriate knowledge and experience to undertake their duties. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) will be an Ex Officio member of the Board.

It is proposed that the Board of Trustees will establish committees e.g. Audit Committee, Finance Committee, Education Standards Committee. The makeup of the committee membership is proposed to be 5 – 7 individuals, with a majority membership from the board of trustees, but to include Governors who are appointed to LGBs within the MAT for example, a Finance Committee may comprise 7 committee members, 4 from the Board of Trustees and 3 from LGBs, this will ensure that LGBs have a voice at Board level.

With the exception of the CEO none of the Members or Trustees will receive a salary from the Multi Academy Trust. The CEOs salary will be determined by the Board of Trustees in compliance with the Multi Academy Trusts pay policy.

**37. I can't see who else has been considered for the MAT - Prima may be the best choice but with a takeover this big I'd expect to have at least 3 companies competing for the position.** Prima is not a company, it is currently established as a Multi Academy Trust, sponsored by the Best Practice Network, however it does not have any schools within it.

The Governors at Cotham School resolved to convert Cotham from a Single Academy Trust to a Multi Academy Trust in January this year, and work commenced to make that change, Cotham was approached by Prima to discuss the potential to work together. The original discussions were around Cotham ‘joining’ the Prima Learning Trust (under the sponsorship of the Best Practice Network), it was considered that this was not in the best interest of Cotham School, however the ethos of the Prima Learning Trust aligned closely to Cotham’s and the skills and experience of the Prima Learning Trust Trustees were recognised as being of

significant benefit to a MAT, it was therefore proposed that Cotham proceeded to establish a Multi Academy Trust working with the current Prima Learning Trust which, once Cotham's application to convert was approved, would be wound up, thereby freeing up the name for the newly established MAT.

**38. What is the estimated cost of Cotham 'taking over' Prima?** There are no additional costs of 'taking over' Prima over and above the costs of setting up a standard multi-academy trust. Prima will be covering the costs of changing its name and winding up the trust in the new year – once the new Prima Learning Trust is established.

**39. " The trust intends to operate 'School Teachers Pay and Conditions' for teaching staff, attractive terms and conditions for associate staff and a joint staff consultative committee." However, intention is one thing, implementation is another. The marketization of education (in all age ranges) is being accompanied by the adoption of corporate practices – an expansion of executive pay, worsening terms and conditions, less security and higher workloads for more junior staff. The cooperative model provides a buffer against this trend, in what ways will protection from this corporate trend be embedded in Prima's governance structures, other than a glibly worded 'intention'?** Our commitment to our staff is key to raising standards at Cotham School and other schools who might join our trust in the future.

We are committed to fully engaging with all staff and there has been a significant improvement in the staff consultation process during the last year; a consultation structure has been created to ensure all staff understand where key issues are discussed and where they should raise individual concerns or suggestions. In addition to this the Headteacher meets regularly with Trade Union Representatives and staff representatives.

This structure will continue; however, we wish to improve it still further with the addition of a joint Governors and Staff Committee. The committee will comprise of members of Trade Unions, nominated staff representatives, nominated governors, the Business Manager and the Headteacher. The committee will be the forum for negotiation and sharing of information by the Trade Unions and the school and will consult on employment procedure and working and organisational arrangements. The proposed Stakeholder Involvement Model can be viewed via a link on the MAT consultation page.

**40. Once in a MAT a teacher can be moved from one school to another in the same MAT without any say from the school as school loses powers of autonomy.** There may be an opportunity for staff to move within the MAT if they wished to do so, such an opportunity could offer significant professional development. This query has also been addressed in staff FAQ's:

**41. Will the staff be expected to work in other schools or provide cover in other schools?** Nobody would be asked to work in a partner school if they did not wish to do so, although having the ability to move staff between schools could provide a great opportunity for career development if it was needed.

**42. Equally money can be moved?** Under a MAT structure, the annual funding in respect of each academy would be received by the MAT and would be under the control of the trustees. Funding received by a MAT can be 'pooled', i.e. it can be applied across any academy within a MAT. This can assist in ensuring the ongoing viability of an academy through fluctuations in revenue and expenditure but does of course mean that part of the budget that has in principle been allocated to one academy could possibly be used to support another academy. The proposed funding methodology for schools in the Prima Learning Trust is to fully devolve funding to each individual school with the exception of a small top slice, which is to be determined, to pay for the central services that would be provided by the MAT. The Trustees of the MAT have an obligation to act in the best interests of the MAT as a whole. They therefore need to have due regard to the funding needs and allocations of each individual academy. If a particular academy felt its GAG funding was being deployed unfairly, its headteacher could ultimately appeal to the Secretary of State for Education who could impose a restriction on how the GAG is applied.

**43. The school refers to partnering with schools in Central and East Bristol as part of the MAT. Does it plan just to partner with primary schools? How many schools is it looking to partner with? Will these just be Cotham's feeder schools or schools outside it's primary catchment area?** Growth plans for the multi-academy trust include primary and other secondary schools. This is to enable better transition from primary to secondary and to share learning between phases. We are not in a position to announce the names of schools that are likely to join the MAT.

**44. How will they ensure that Cotham school isn't negatively affected by the future goals of the MAT to promote improvement amongst its other schools?** The objective of school improvement work is to strengthen the provision at Cotham School and not weaken it. We want to contribute to an increase in standards across all schools in Bristol. Sharing good practice and ideas is a two-way process and one where we believe that Cotham School students will benefit.

**45. While MAT's are not for profit (Not for loss) organisations, how will a Cotham MAT ensure it's protected from excessive use of Consultants, Staff salaries out of line with the education market, procurement of supplies and services.** There are rigorous controls on the financial conduct of multi academy trusts. In particular they have a duty to obtain value for money. The finance director of a multi-academy trust is held accountable by a dedicated finance and audit committee who will be advised by external independent auditors appointed by the board. This is identical to the current system at Cotham where the governing body have this responsibility.

**46. The FAQ under point 5 refers to attracting Ofsted Outstanding & Good schools, does this mean the MAT will not join with failing schools - this would be my personal preference e.g. Schools need to be at this standard before being allowed to join. I'd like to see the MAT as an accelerator of good schools joining forces rather than a weakening standards and route to deflect focus & resources else where.** Although the previous consultation on setting up a MAT agreed that Cotham would apply to be a sponsor, that is not the current proposal. The current proposal is to set up a strong MAT of outstanding and good schools and when established consider applying for sponsor status. The governors want Cotham School to play a leading role in a self improving school led system.

**47. What will be the MAT's stance on children who have been excluded or suspended. e.g. those with serious behavioural issues? Will they be able to better provide for these children or will they look to move them to other schools?** The proposed multi-academy trust has clear values around inclusion (see earlier answer on values). Prima Learning Trust bring expertise in this area which will help guide and support Trust schools develop outstanding provision for children with special needs.

**48. The MAT will aim for high standards. This is an excellent endeavour, but what will the MAT or Cotham School do if there is limited funding? Will they seek to ensure that 'middle' achieving children get good grades and ignore a minority of low achieving children in order to look good in league tables?** Please see previous answer. In addition, the very nature and formal partnership of the multi-academy trust means that will be financial saving through cost sharing. These savings can then be devoted to ensure 'every' child can succeed. The performance measures that are used by the DfE have changed over the years and while in the past the focus on GCSE grades above C may have affected some schools' decisions, the latest progress 8 measures require all students to make progress and achieve the best grades possible through a broad and balanced curriculum offer. Schools can certainly no longer focus on groups based on ability to score highly on these measures.

The MAT will be measured by the DfE using the same measures that are used on individual schools.

**49. Will the MAT support Cotham School's emphasis on arts, even if government is wishing to focus on more traditional school learning?** There are no plans to change Cotham School's art specialism.

**50. What responsibility will the MAT have if Cotham School falls below the Ofsted standards?** The Multi Academy Trust will be held directly accountable by the Regional School Commissioner for any drop of standards at any of the schools within the MAT. The trustees will be expected to not let this happen in the first place and to take effective measures to improve things if it did.

**51. The MAT is non profit making this seems a very important principle in provision of education, but will they accept donations from other organisations? For instance, religious or commercial organisations, who would seek to have some benefit in return for the donation and then how would this be managed? I am concerned about advertising, bias of curriculum and weakening of the school's control because of such connections.** There are clear rules which prohibit multi-academy trusts from receiving financial donations in exchange for benefit in kind or cash. The financial controls – separate finance and audit committee and an external independent audit - intended to provide effective financial accountability. This is no different than Cotham's current position.

#### **Cotham's MAT consultation in 2015 - 2016**

**52. In the last 'consultation' of the small number of people who voiced an opinion the majority of them were against Cotham joining a MAT but the school went ahead.** The previous consultation received 23 responses, 11 for the

conversion and 12 against. Governors considered the response and concluded that it was in the best interests of the school to convert to a Multi Academy Trust.

### **Standard versus Co-operative Articles of Association**

***53. Why have Cotham School decided not to use the Cooperative articles for the new Trust?*** Governors considered very carefully whether to stay with the Co-operative model and decided to consult on a recommendation to set up the new trust using standards multi-academy trust (MAT) articles of association at the FGB meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> July, the minutes of this meeting are on the school website. **FGB Approved Minutes 06 July 2016**

***54. "Governors felt that the standard articles are more welcoming and inclusive of all types of schools (with different stakeholder consultation structures) and are not a barrier to being 'cooperative". I will be interested to know specifics of where and why this has been a barrier?*** Governors carefully considered the options of establishing a non-cooperative MAT, based on the DfE's model 1 Articles, and establishing a cooperative MAT, based on the DfE's latest model 6 Articles. **The record of the discussions can be found on the agreed minutes of the governors meeting of 6th July which are available on the school website FGB Approved Minutes 06 July 2016**

***55. Is this 'feeling' held by all Governors and if not, by what proportion?*** The vote to consult on setting up a MAT with standard non-cooperative MAT Articles of Association was passed unanimously by the governors of Cotham School.

***56. "Having standard articles does not prevent the school from having fully representative stakeholder engagement. Indeed, the governors believe that engagement tailored to the needs of the community leads to higher standards and a more inclusive school". In what ways does the current model militate against Cotham being an inclusive school? What is the evidence for this?*** The formal stakeholder constituency model under the cooperative Articles is complex and it is generally not well understood by the school's stakeholders. This constituency/forum model is also used in the current cooperative MAT Articles. Governors believe that it is possible to engage in a more meaningful, relevant and more understandable way with the school's stakeholders outside of the formal cooperative structure. Governors of Cotham School are currently considering a more inclusive stakeholder engagement model should Cotham Governors formally agree that the multi-academy trust be set up using the standard articles.

***57. The current model gives explicit recognition to the fact that the school community is made up of overlapping communities (students, staff, parents, partner organisations, civic community etc); how does the current model militate against the needs of any of these communities? What is the evidence for this?*** As set out above, the formal stakeholder constituency model under the cooperative Articles is complex and it is generally not well understood by the school's stakeholders. It is particularly confusing for many parents, and governors are concerned that the current constituencies (especially the parent constituency) are not representative of these communities as a whole. Governors believe that engagement with the school's community (students, staff, parents, partner organisations, civic community etc.) can be achieved in a more meaningful, relevant and more understandable way by developing a bespoke model of engagement for



the school.

**58. The standard academy trust articles lend themselves to top down management. Whilst this is undoubtedly easier than the consultative approach that is a feature of the Cooperative academy model, do the senior staff team and Governors believe that the standard articles provide a better model for encouraging our pupils to recognise, understand and respect democratic processes?** Teaching British Values and the importance of democracy and the rule of law is a legal requirement for all schools. However, the Governors' main priority is to improve standards and to ensure that our students leave Cotham School having reached their full potential. Over the last 12 months, Cotham School has introduced new ways of engaging with stakeholders that are popular with parents and students. All the academic evidence suggests that effective engagement leads to high standards.

**59. "The Forum model has only been partially effective in engaging all our families and communities and is not judged as meeting the interests of our diverse school community". Judged by whom and on what evidence?** In reviewing the effectiveness of our governance structure, Cotham School governors judged that the Forum is unrepresentative of the student and parent body and therefore does not necessarily meet all the interests of the school community. This issue has been discussed by the Cooperative Forum as well as at Cotham School Governing Body meetings.

**60. What will take the place of the Forum? The statement accompanying the Memorandum of Understanding includes the following undertaking: "To ensure effective representation of the diversity of the school community a fully representative consultative group will be introduced. This will be spelt out in the consultation" What is the proposal for this group? The stakeholder diagram does not illustrate one collective consultative group and has insufficient detail.** Having one collective consultative group has not proved effective in engaging with all our stakeholders. For example, many parents have said that they didn't know about the earlier consultation on the proposal to become a MAT yet it was discussed and debated at the Cooperative Forum on 27 January 2016. The Forum minutes have been published and are still on the Cotham School web site: [Coop Forum Minutes 27 January 2016](#)

**61. What evidence is there that an alternative model will be any more successful in engaging hard-to-reach communities?** Already the changes put in place by the Headteacher are reaping rewards in terms of ensuring the needs of parents from very diverse communities are met. The Headteacher has developed an alternative model for engagement which is available to download on the consultation pages.

**62. If the Prima approach involves outreach initiatives, rather than always expecting people to come to the school, what is preventing such initiatives from being carried out now?** Nothing prevents the school from working with other schools now. However, working with other schools as part of a trust will bring a greater level of commitment and accountability.

**63. It seemed before that it was a red-line issue that all members of the MAT**



***should be co-ops as should the MAT itself be; how and why has this been dropped?*** This was the original thinking of the Governors, however the DfE revised the Memorandum and Articles for multi-academy trusts to provide 2 models. The first being Model 1 Standard articles. The second being Model 6 which accommodate multi-academy trusts with both cooperative and non cooperative schools. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academy-model-memorandum-and-articles-of-association>

There would be more scope for growth if schools could join which were not cooperative schools hence the dropping of the all multi-academy trust members being co-ops.

***64. Academies joining a MAT are not like members joining a club, it is more like companies being taken over by a conglomerate, and in this vein the articles of the overarching body will inevitably have an overarching effect on the member trusts. You need to ensure that this does not compromise the cooperative nature of Cotham nor work against its existing values and principles, and that needs to be enshrined in the articles i.e. they cannot be off the shelf-articles but must have at least some extra provisions to provide this protection***

This is part of the work being carried out at the moment, There is a proposed governance structure on the school website, governors would be grateful for any views on the proposed structure. Please comment using the form on the website. Questions will be shared with Governors and published with answers, but please do make comments on the website form.

<http://www.cotham.bristol.sch.uk/form/?pid=82&form=22>

***65. You need to think very carefully about the articles. Off-the-shelf they presumably provide legality, but you need to ensure that provisions are explicitly in there to prevent undesirable outcomes and to enable desirable ones. For instance as this is effectively a corporate merger, who ends up owning the assets and who is able to dispose of them? Is there a risk of expropriation of council property? Is there a risk of asset stripping? What provision is in place to ensure LA representation? What provision is in place to prevent the introduction of selection / conversion to Grammar School status etc?*** The members will be the owners of the trust and own any assets. They will also have the power to make any changes to the trusts governance structure and the way in which it meets its object. You will notice that there is little difference between the objects in both Model 1 & 6 of the articles. Or the power of the members and trustees. The difference between the 2 models being the way the members and trustees are appointed and replaced.

***66. How will a trust with a mixture of co-ops and non co-ops work? All your materials up to now envisaged all members being co-ops and hence having a hierarchy of fora - yet if non-co-ops are to be members, then how does that work?*** Model 6 articles say that the multi-academy trust has to have a forum, they do not specify that all of the schools in the multi-academy trust need to have a Forum. We would imagine that members of the constituencies of the multi-academy trust would make up the Forum. This would mean that there were no hierarchies as all students, parents, staff, etc...of the multi-academy trust can choose to join the Forum meaning that the forum is not dependent on individual schools being co operative schools. This is a change to previous cooperative multi-academy trust articles where all schools had to be part of the schools cooperative society and have a Forum. The members of the trust have the power to decide on the nature of the

Forum and how it is structured, there is no specific structure laid out in the model 6 articles. Schools can now choose to be or not to be cooperative schools. This will not be the case under the proposal in the consultation as Model 1 articles do not include a Forum

If you have a question that we haven't covered please send it to [matconsultation@cotham.bristol.sch.uk](mailto:matconsultation@cotham.bristol.sch.uk) We will ensure that it is answered and added to this document.

***When responding please provide dates and supporting evidence for all responses related to past decisions including, where relevant:***

- Correspondence with other local bodies including schools and learning partners***
- Government policy***
- Direction from or correspondence with the National Schools Commissioner***
- Direction from or correspondence with the South West Regional Education Commissioner.***

***We also request that the source of your response is made transparent i.e.. who is responding:***

- Christine Bayliss?***
- Prima Learning Trust?***
- Cotham Governing Body? If so, which members?***

In response to the above requests. Any public records re governors decisions, discussions and otherwise are on the school website. In the governors section in agreed minutes of governing body meetings.

There is no correspondence with regards to any discussions re forming MATs with other schools, any conversations that have taken place have been verbal and no formal planning or agreements with other schools governing bodies has taken place.

The answers to these questions (apart from those relating to the Prima trust directly which have been answered by members of the Prima trust) have been drafted by the chair of governors, checked for accuracy by members of Cotham's leadership team and have been shared with all members of the governing body for them to comment.

## **1. Alliances**

**1a What happened to the North Bristol Teaching and Learning Alliance of which Cotham was a member? Why was this not considered as a potential way forward/grouping for a MAT?**

NW24 is still operating and Cotham is still a part of this. When NW24 was launched it was clear that forming a MAT was not its purpose.

**1b Which schools have been approached by Cotham as potential MAT members? Which schools have approached Cotham? Has Ashton Park been approached? Has Redland Green been sounded out?**

Cotham has had conversations with Colston's primary, Cabot, Ashton Park and Blaise primary. None of these conversations have been formal. As part of this consultation: chairs of governors in NW24; Bristol Secondary schools who are not already part of a trust or faith schools and special schools who are not already in the process of forming a MAT have been asked to take part in this consultation. We have made a request to Bristol's Governor Development Service to circulate a message re this consultation to other chairs of governors in Bristol.

Is it not time for serious approaches to be made and discussions to be had with these schools, especially in the light of failed Free School bids?

We are currently consulting on forming a MAT, if at the end of this consultation the governors decide to proceed then the school will be in a position to approach other schools with a formal proposition.

**1c What would be the attitude of Colston's (a co-operative primary school) and Cabot primaries to the proposed jettisoning of Cotham's co-operative status?**

This is part of the consultation, until we have received a formal response from these schools we can not speculate on the view of other governing bodies.

**1d How can you be sure that the Post 16 centre will be unaffected?**

North Bristol post 16 is run in conjunction with Redland Green School. It is a successful centre and there is no intention to change any agreement that will have a detrimental effect on a successful partnership.

**2. Proposed structure of MAT**

**2a Why can't Cotham retain its co-operative model and the co-operative articles of association as a MAT?**

Adopting the co-operative model was supposed to provide safeguards for the school's community engagement and ethos when it became an academy. Why is that no longer considered necessary?

Cotham can not use cooperative articles of association using the Model 1 articles as proposed.

The cooperative model of a forum of constituencies developed by Cotham as a cooperative school could be retained.

However the structure was reliant on a considerable amount of school resources as well as the voluntary work carried out by its members, the school is now in a position where these resources are no longer available due to changes in funding from central government.

The model will have to adapt to function in an environment where it does not have the level of support it had previously.

It is considered necessary to continue schools engagement with the community, The proposal for this MAT is that a school in the MAT's ethos will only be questioned if students at that school are not being cared for, well taught, happy in their learning and making progress.

The proposal in this consultation is that the structure suggested will enable each school in the MAT to set its own ethos. Schools will have the freedom to maintain their own ethos if students are making progress and parents want to send their children to the school.

**2b Has remaining a standalone Single Academy Trust been seriously considered as a possibility? Is there any legislation or government directive that specifically prevents this option?**

Yes, the governors have been in agreement for several years that the school needed to form more formal partnerships with other schools to form a MAT. Please see minutes from previous years governors meetings on the school website. There is no government directive or legislation that forces a school to become a MAT, however with increased financial pressure due to the real terms decrease in funding, having the security of formal partnerships will help the school to maintain the provision it makes to students as long term planning will not be at risk from other partner schools changing their priorities.

**3. Transparency and best practice**

**3a Why was there only one presentation to the governing body – that from Prima Learning Trust? Were other potential sponsors/organisations/options sought out or invited to present?**

The Governors did not advertise for sponsors, therefore we did not carry out a formal tendering process looking for a sponsor.

Prima is not acting as a sponsor and there is no sponsor in this model.

Prima approached the school and the work done with Prima so far has been to develop this proposal. During the time Cotham has been working with Prima Cotham have asked Prima for the commitment not to work with other schools which they have honoured and Prima have asked Cotham to agree to working together with the proposal that is being consulted on. Both parties

have made the commitment to work on this proposal and not to work with other parties on alternatives while doing so. It would be wrong for Cotham not to honour this commitment.

**3b Is Prima the best fit for Cotham? One of the reasons for Cotham giving up its co-operative status seems to be that Prima have pushed for Standard Articles of Association. Would it be therefore better to find another partner which doesn't require this?**

After discussion at the FGB meeting the governors agreed to work with Prima and consult on this proposal. Cotham has strengths and experience in running a comprehensive school with a diverse intake and of working with another outstanding school to run a shared sixth form provision. Prima are a set of potential trustees who have experience of successful work in school improvement, particularly in helping schools to develop effective partnerships.

The governing body has decided to work with Prima and we are at the stage of the process of consulting on the proposal. Once the consultation is complete governors will meet to consider all of the responses and decide on the next step they want the school to take.

They will do this in light of their responsibility to act in what they think is the best interest of the students in the school now and those that will attend in the future.

**3c What is the precise relationship between Best Practice Network and Prima Learning Trust, given the direct and indirect links between BPN and some of the members of Prima Learning Trust and the governing body?**

Best Practice Network will have no connection with the proposed new multi-academy trust. Best Practice Network are sponsors of the existing Prima Learning Trust and has nominated members and Trustees. However, this trust is being wound up and will cease to exist as an organisation once the new trust is established.

When the new trust is established all trustees and members will have to declare any financial interests. Just as Cotham governors declare their interests at the start of full governing body meetings this process will continue. They are a matter of public record and can be found on these web pages.

**3d What's in this for Prima?**

A great opportunity to contribute to the development of a successful MAT utilising the expertise and experience of members of the Prima Board. However, long-term there is nothing in this for Prima because it will cease to exist as charitable trust and will be wound up. The individuals who make up

the current trustees and members will have the opportunity to continue to give their time and expertise as voluntary service to the education community in Bristol and the South West.

This opportunity is also open to any member of the Cotham School community who would like to volunteer to become a member, trustee or governor.

Prior to the appointment of members and trustees they will be required to declare any financial interests and be subject to appropriate due diligence and safeguarding checks.

### **3e What's in this for Best Practice Network?**

Nothing, Best Practice Network would have to follow the same procurement process as any other service provider to the MAT or schools in it. There are details of the restrictions on the relationships between trustees, their possible business interests and MAT's in the Model 1 and Model 6 articles. They operate in exactly the same way as current governors are required to register any interests at the start of each governing body meeting. The link to these documents has been posted as an answer to previous questions.

**3f Isn't the statement on the information to parents about not using co-operative articles of association misleading? It implies, though it does not actually say, that schools who are not co-operatives would not be able to join the MAT. This is not the case.**

The previous co-operative mem and arts were clear that schools who were not cooperatives could not join the MAT. The latest Model 6 articles have removed this potential obstacle.

## **4. Governance structure**

**4a Which of the 16 people at the top of the proposed governance structure for the new MAT would be salaried?**

None apart from the CEO. This is the same as the current governance structure where the head teacher is the only paid governor. Members, Trustees and Governors would carry out their work in these roles in their own time on a voluntary basis as is the situation now.

**4b Why do the founder members of the Trust have to be an equal partnership between the school and Prima Learning Trust? Shouldn't Cotham have more members?**



The proposal is to set up an equal partnership, Equity is one of the schools cooperative values and the governing body are following this.

**4c Which powers of decision making, currently held by the Headteacher, could potentially revert to the Trust?**

Potentially all powers could revert to the trust if a school was failing to provide high quality education to its students. The proposal is that the MAT will delegate all powers to schools whose students are progressing (see question 2a).

**4d How is the existence of the Local Governing Body protected? Which powers held by the Gobs could potentially revert to the Trust?**

The local governing bodies will be protected by their effectiveness in running a school, the fundamental premise of the MAT is that it will promote sharing good practice between schools and help schools improve by building effective partnerships. The trust would only intervene where schools were failing to provide high quality education to its students. One of the responsibilities the trustees will hold is to provide support to a school in the MAT before difficulties it faces have a detrimental effect on the education it provides to students.

**5. Consultation and representation**

**5a As the previous consultation of parents last December (about becoming a MAT) received 25 replies, most not in favour, but the school went ahead with the application anyway, what will happen if the result of the current consultation of parents results in a majority against the proposal? How seriously will parental opinion be taken?**

This is a consultation not a poll. Governors will be reading all the comments submitted via the website at the end of this consultation. We would like to hear people's opinions on the proposal so far. Governors have a duty to consult the Forum on strategic issues and also to act in the long term strategic interests of the students in the school. As with all responses we will read the formal response to this consultation from the Forum and will consider it before deciding on the next step.

**5b Christine Bayliss appears to be working for both the school (replying to parents' questions and advising on MAT conversion?) and also Prima Learning Trust. Is that not a conflict of interests? What is the nature and value of the contract between Christine Bayliss and the school?**

Christine Bayliss is working as a consultant for Cotham School to take forward the work of the joint steering group. She was employed on a part time contract with Prima Learning Trust to develop and establish the existing

Prima Learning Trust. However, this contract expired earlier this year. The issue of 'conflict of interest' does not apply because this is a joint proposal submitted by equal partners.

**5c If the co-operative model is discarded, do the Standard Articles of Association provide for the engagement of various community groups and, if not, how would the school envisage that it would continue the work of the co-operative in this area?**

Model 1 and Model 6 articles allow MAT's to choose how they engage with their community groups. There are details of proposed engagement models on the school website.

**5d What does 'full delegation' of powers to schools mean in practice? What limitations will there be on school powers? What does 'schools performing well' mean? Will there be an agreed set of criteria for how this will be judged?**

Full delegation means that schools will keep the powers they have with regards to how they spend their budget to make sure that students in the school make progress. Progress will be measured by whatever measures central government sets for measuring school performance and how successful the school is in attracting students and filling its places. This is no different to the current situation that Cotham is in now.

There are currently some differences in how larger MAT's are funded, e.g. Where a MAT has 5 or more schools and at least 3,000 students it receives capital funding on a per student basis. This funding is to maintain items such as buildings and IT hardware this funding would be held by the MAT and the Trustees would have the responsibility for planning how this money is spent across the MAT. Currently Cotham has to make bids for additional capital funding on an annual basis. We have not been successful in these bids and essential capital repairs and maintenance carried out recently have been paid for by the reserves the school has built up.

## **6 Students and teachers**

**6a How will the needs of Cotham students be protected if the expertise and time of Cotham staff are needed (as founder member) to support the needs of other, often smaller, schools in a MAT?**

This proposal recognises that all staff working in schools never stop learning, staff from Cotham will help staff in other schools do their jobs better and all staff in Cotham will learn how they can do their jobs better from doing so. Cotham has a staff development and training programme for staff already, as more formal links with other schools are developed staff from other schools

will be able to join that programme and Cotham staff will be able to join other schools programmes. The proposal is that the MAT will develop a trust wide training and development programme for all staff. Currently staff in the school have a limited set of opportunities to develop their career in the school so to do that they have to leave. This will still remain the case in a MAT, however by moving to other schools within the MAT the skills and expertise they have will still be available to the MAT's training and development programme.

The current challenges of giving staff time to train and develop without taking them away from their specific tasks will remain.

### **6b What will Cotham students gain by being part of a MAT? How can you guarantee pupil spend a current level or above?**

Cotham's students will gain as negotiating between school support will be easier, long term planning of staff development will be more secure as the risk of a school changing its priorities or withdrawing from an agreement at short notice will be removed.

Spend per student is set by the funding that is received by the school from the education funding agency. Forming a MAT will not bring increased funding as was the case on academy conversion.

However this proposal does not including recruiting any new members of staff, the governing body and head teachers of the school have planned for the formation of a MAT since the school converted to become an academy, as a result of this the structure of the leadership team has the capacity to take on the additional work necessary to work with and support other schools.

The formation of a MAT will not in itself give any guarantee to maintain the amount of money schools have to spend on students as this is set by central government. It will give school governing bodies the chance to make economies of scale by employing staff across schools and maintain opportunities to students e.g. by running less popular courses in one school so that class sizes can remain viable, as is done in post 16 at the moment.

## **7. Finance**

### **7a How much money does Cotham have in its reserves (restricted and unrestricted)? Given that any reserves become MAT-owned, how will the capital needs of Cotham be protected going forward? What is to stop Cotham's budget being redirected to another school that is in worse financial health?**

The school currently has £1.8m reserves, reserves of all schools joining a MAT are transferred to the MAT. Sharing of the schools reserves with other schools fits with the schools co-operative ethos.

Trustees of MATs have the responsibility to make sure the MAT's assets are used to meet the needs of all its students. This consultation is asking if

people think the proposed governance structure will ensure that trustees are both able to do this and appropriately scrutinised.

**7b As the MAT grows, what limits will be put on the payment of salaries to MAT staff?**

**What percentage of school income would be payable to the MAT in the first year? The second? The third?**

As is the case with all schools the MAT will have to have its own pay policy. There have been no discussions about changing the schools pay policy. As per the previous answer planning since conversion to an academy has ensured that there is the capacity to accommodate growth of the MAT. This capacity will cover good and outstanding schools joining the MAT over the medium term. If a school in difficulty is required to join a MAT, through forced academisation, any budget deficits it has at the time of conversion are retained by the local authority. The trustees will have to make adjustments to budgets on an annual basis as government changes its funding to school. This is no different to the current position the school is in. Any school requesting to join the MAT will have to show that it has a creditable and realistic recovery plan if it is in a position where it has a budget deficit.

**7c MATs cost time and money – what benefit will the formal documents of Trust bring?**

**Aren't economies of scale and so on achieved by informal federation or similar? Give example of existing MATs where cost benefit across all schools has been proven.**

Exact benefits can not be stated at the moment as they are dependent on the individual needs of schools. Cotham has a very good Administration and Business Team and this is one area where a joining school could benefit. No, informal federations do not provide the same security of planning that a MAT will bring. The Kingswood Partnership (a post 16 partnership of 6 LA schools in south Gloucestershire is one example of an informal partnership that failed.

Informal partnerships cost time and money, there is more risk to this time and money being lost if partners do not fully engage with them or are able to withdraw from them at short notice.

**7d How much has been spent to date in terms of legal fees and consultancy connected to the MAT/ Free School bids and investigations? How much has been allocated to future spend? Costs to include Cotham's spend and that of Prima Learning Trust and Best Practice Network.**

This information will be taken to the next FP&GP governors meeting. It will not be available until that meeting.

**7e Explain fully the cost implications of providing the Prima guaranteed training for members of staff. How will this be timetabled? Who will provide it? If it is to be provided by Best Practice Network is this a conflict of interests? What will the total cost per year be? How does this compare to existing training costs?**

The Prima Guarantee was developed to support the delivery of excellent teaching in the classroom. It is central to Prima's school improvement strategy. It is also a firm commitment to staff that they will be supported, cherished and developed at a time when schools are struggling to recruit and retain the best staff. What is more it is aimed at all staff employed throughout the trust so that there are clear career pathways for both teaching and associate staff.

It will be provided in response to the needs of each school and their staff and provided through school-to-school support through master classes and coaching and through CPD programmes, commissioned through the required procurement procedures, where appropriate. The CPD budget will be agreed each as part of the budget setting process. The costs will be dependent of what can be provided in-house and what needs to be procured by other providers.

Best Practice Network provide a range of courses for teaching and associate staff and they will be able to bid for contracts on the same basis as other providers.

## **7. Risks**

**7a Parents have been provided by the school with a very brief outline of the benefits of becoming a MAT, but not the risks. Has a list of the potential risks been drawn up by the governing body and could an outline be made available to parents in the interests of information and balance?**

Isolation, Reputation of being seen as isolationist, Risk of sharing schools resources and time with no reciprocal return. Risk of not forming formal partnerships with other schools and having to do so later as a joiner of a MAT not a founding member.

**7b What happens if another school later joins the MAT and there is already a full board of trustees with 11 members? How does that school get representation?**

The proposed structure will mean that at a Trustee level, a suitably skilled person associated with that school will be able to fill a trustee place when one becomes available. Another route is that a person associated with that school could be co-opted onto the Trustee board if a co opted appointment was required.

When a new school joins the MAT all the Trustees will take on the responsibility to support that school to improve. The Trustees have to act for all the schools in the MAT they do not represent a particular school. This is identical to the position parent governors are in at the moment, we have the responsibility to take decisions based on the outcomes for all students, not our own children, the subjects our children follow, the part of town we live in or the socio economic group we are in. Trustees have to behave in the same manner.

**7c What is to stop PRIMA passing on its interests in Cotham? For example, if it were to merge with/be taken over by another body, what protections will exist?**

The existing Prima Learning Trust will cease to exist once the new trust is established. It will have no interests to pass on. In the proposed model the members are individuals they are not corporate bodies. Neither Cotham nor Prima have any interests in the Trust that they can pass on. When individual members leave they will be replaced by individuals. Any person wishing to become a member will have to have skills and experience that will enable them to complete the role. Any person applying to become a member or trustee will have to agree to all necessary checks with regards to safeguarding and declarations of any outside interests.

**8. Unnecessary haste?**

**8a Given that you give up the identity of the school and it ceases to exist as a legal entity when you become a MAT, why rush? Look at the Ridings Federation in South Glos – they're broke and in big trouble.**

The proposal is that schools in the MAT do not give up their identity, they retain their name, staffing, governing body, etc....

Cotham has already had the opportunity to grow a MAT with a secondary school in Bristol which it declined as the governors were advised by the head that at that time the school did not have the capacity to provide the support necessary. Cotham has already missed the opportunity to choose to open new primary schools in Bristol as we were not a MAT. Other schools governing bodies are looking to join together to form MAT's and work in closer partnerships. At the moment we have choices and we are consulting because the governing body have agreed to work on the development outlined in the proposals.

All schools and academies are challenged by budget balancing to some extent. The question in the consultation is do people think that the proposed governance structure will provide enough support and challenge to ensure that budget management will ensure that budgets are managed effectively for the benefits of all students.